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10-Minute Yoga to Unkink Your Neck and Shoulders
Practice it any time you need.
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This 10-minute yoga for neck and shoulders practice is specifically designed to release your neck and shoulder tension. If you've been feeling stiff or have a little tightness in your upper body—especially in the neck, shoulders, or upper back—this class will bring you some relief.

It's not just focused on your neck and shoulders, though. It's also a 10-minute yoga practice featuring some unexpected variations on simple seated and standing poses. For example, you'll practice Cat and Cow on your forearms to get into the upper back a little more and Goddess Pose with some added twists to release tension in the shoulders. It can simply be what you choose to practice today even when you're not experiencing tension, stiffness, or tightness of any sort.
10-Minute Yoga to Unkink Your Neck and Shoulders
This practice works for all experience levels. No props are required although you're welcome to use them for support in any pose.
(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)
Seated Neck Stretch

Begin sitting, whether cross-legged, kneeling, or however you like that's comfortable to you. Lower your right ear toward your right shoulder. Keep your chin slightly lifted and then bring your left hand behind you to your lower back, as if you were reaching toward the right side of your waist. As you reach your left arm back, draw your left shoulder down. Keep your spine tall and neutral so you're not tilting through your upper body.

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Take some deep breaths here as you relax through your jaw. You can angle your chin slightly upward to change the sensation of the stretch or tuck it slightly downward to target along the back of the neck.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

Seated Side Stretch

Keep your head as it is and release your left arm from your lower back and reach it up and overhead, taking a big side body stretch. Relax your neck fully, creating lots of space along the left side of your waist. Push your right hand into the ground to help lift yourself.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

Seated Twist

Come into a twist by taking your left hand toward your right knee. Your right fingertips go on the floor behind you for support as you open your chest toward the right. Your hip bones are facing forward and you're rotating through the torso. There's no slouching or rounding. Exhale as you release and face forward again.

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Then do the same stretches on your other side. So you're going to drop your left ear toward your left shoulder and bring your right hand toward your lower back. You might notice that one side has a little more sensation than the other. Perhaps your dominant hand side has a little bit more tightness, which can be very common. Then come into your side bend and eventually take your twist.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

Forearm Cat and Cow

Come into Cat and Cow, but try it on your forearms. So from tabletop pose, lower down onto your elbows, keeping them about shoulder-distance apart with your knees underneath your hips. As you inhale, lower your belly, lift your gaze, and curl your tailbone up in Cow Pose.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

As you exhale, round your back and contract your core as you release your head in Cat Pose. Spread your shoulder blades away from one another. Keep going in and out of

these two poses. As you inhale and arch into a backbend, squeeze your shoulder blades behind you. As you exhale and round, broaden them away from each other.
(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)
Sphinx Pose

Come back through to a neutral Sphinx Pose from here by staying down on your forearms and let your hips come onto the mat. Your feet are hip-distance apart. Push the tops of your feet into the mat, roll your shoulders back, open through your chest, and find a little more length here. Exhale as you release.
(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)
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Downward-Facing Dog
Push your hands into the mat, tuck your toes under, and lift your hips up and back, taking your feet about hip-distance apart, maybe a little wider, in Downward-Facing Dog. You can absolutely bend your knees. The emphasis here is really going to be on a neck release, so let your head dangle and be heavy as you press your chest toward your thighs. You're not here for long. So just stretch through the backs of your legs and straighten your arms.
(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)
Rag Doll
Then walk your feet to the top of the mat and take them toward the edges of the mat for your rag doll as you fold forward. Your knees are bent here and you can grab hold of your elbows and rock a little, side to side, maybe turning your head in slow motion. Notice if all of your body weight is in the balls of your feet and rock back into your heels a little.
(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)
Goddess Pose Twist
Release your hands to the mat, bend your knees, push into your heels, and slowly roll all the way up to standing. Take your legs wide in Goddess Pose with your heels slightly in and your toes pointing out toward the edges of your mat. Inhale as you circle your arms wide and up, exhale as you bend your knees and sink into a Squat. Then place your hands on your thighs and do a little shoulder drop and release here. Your right shoulder lowers down as you twist through your upper body toward your left side. This can be a really nice thigh stretch at the same time when you use your right hand to push your right knee open a little wider.
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Switch sides, dropping your left shoulder as your right shoulder rolls back, and then come back to center.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

Wide-Legged Standing Forward Bend

Straighten your legs, turn your feet in so they're parallel to the shorter edges of the mat, and inhale as you lift and lengthen, and then fold down into Wide-Legged Standing Forward Bend. It's a big hamstring stretch here, although you're focusing on decompressing through your upper back and neck, so hold onto your elbows like you were doing in Rag Doll or take any other arm variation that you prefer.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

Seated or Kneeling Chest Stretch

Bring your hands to the mat, toe heel your feet together, and then bend your knees and lower yourself to the mat so you're either sitting or kneeling. Stretch through the front of the shoulders by bringing your hands behind you and coming onto your fingertips, bending into your elbows, and squeezing your shoulder blades and elbows toward one another. Feel that nice stretch through the front and tops of the shoulders.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

Seated or Kneeling Eagle Arms Shoulder Stretch

When you release, stay on your heels, bend your elbows approximately 90 degrees in front of you, and wrap your right arm under your left once or twice. Press your shoulders down, keep your elbows up, and move your hands away from your face in Eagle arms. Maybe you tuck your chin toward your chest. Really, push your forearms toward one another.

Lift your head, release your arms, and then do the same thing on the other side, wrapping your left arm under your right arm.

(Photo: Yoga With Kassandra)

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Seated Meditation

Unwrap your arms and come to sit in any way that is comfortable for you. Close your eyes and bring your hands together at the front of your chest. Observe as you feel into your neck, your shoulders, your upper back, and your chest, noticing how just a few minutes of yoga can make a difference in how you feel and how you carry yourself. Pause here before returning to your day.

Thank you so much everyone for trying this short yoga for neck and shoulders practice.

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Ottawa-based Yin and vinyasa yoga instructor, author, and the face behind YouTube channel Yoga with Kassandra, Kassandra Reinhardt is on a mission to help others feel great with yoga. Yoga with Kassandra has grown to more than 2.4 million subscribers worldwide. She specializes in her bite-sized approach of 10 minute morning classes as well as videos featuring yoga for athletes and mental health.
Kassandra is the author of Yin Yoga: Stretch The Mindful Way (DK Books), has led yoga retreats internationally, and offers online workshops and in-person Yin Yoga training. She is also the creator of the Yoga with Kassandra app, a source for yoga with exclusive video content. With over 2 million people in her online community, Kassandra is expanding her expertise further, with the release of her second book, Year of Yoga: Rituals for Every Day and Every Season (Mandala Publishing). Kassandra and her channel have been featured in CBC, Bustle, PopSugar, Well+Good, and Elle Australia.
Credentials: YTT-200 | YTT-300 | 50-hour yin yoga training | Level 1 yoga therapy

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Chaturanga Asks You to Step Into Your Full Strength

This pose helps you access stability on and off the mat.

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(Photo: Andrew Clark; Design in Canva)

Donna FarhiFollow

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Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Stick Pose) resoundingly contradicts the popular notion that yoga equals contortionism. Rather, this asana is about keeping everything in one piece: The hands and feet touch the ground while the body is suspended above the ground in one unit, as in the calisthenic push-up. The strength required to do Chaturanga Dandasana is not nearly as important as the ability to integrate and organize separate elements of the body so they function cooperatively.

The word “integrity” comes from the Latin integrare, which means to renew or restore. Physical integrity is the renewal or restoration of the body’s original wholeness. This wholeness implies a coordination of movements, a communication between structures such as the legs and the spine. It also implies a balance of strength, flexibility, and relaxation that brings about a perfect tension between these three qualities. When this perfect tension is lacking, we experience ourselves as disjointed or simply “spaced out.” Perhaps the reason Chaturanga frustrates so many newcomers to yoga is that it can only be done if there is a strong cohesive force running through the whole body, from head to toe and from front to back. The integrating force through the length of the torso derives primarily from the support of the arms and the driving power of the legs pushing back. It also comes from the relationship between the soft frontal body (the throat, lungs, abdominal organs) and the firm back body (the spinal column, rib cage and pelvic girdle).

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One of the ways we establish the appropriate relationship between the front and back bodies is by allowing certain underlying muscle reflexes to work for us rather than against us. Reflexes are a force contributing to postural tone, the background activity of muscles beneath the level of voluntary muscle contraction.

(Photo: Yoga Journal; Canva)

Preparing for Chaturanga

In the following preliminary exercise, we explore how this reflex can integrate our bodies to prepare us for practicing Chaturanga Dandasana.

Kneel or sit cross-legged on a blanket. Begin by sitting upright with the crown of the head balanced over the center of the abdomen. Lift your chin and let the throat hang forward (Figure 1). Did you notice that your abdomen automatically popped out? Now draw the front of the throat gently back as if swallowing or sucking, slightly tucking the chin (Figure 2). You may even want to swallow or smack the lips together to stimulate the reflex. Did you notice that the abdomen automatically moved in and back against the spine? Go back and forth between these two positions, projecting the throat forward and then drawing it back.

How to Practice Chaturanga

Chaturanga Dandasana is usually performed following Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana). Many common errors in Chaturanga Dandasana are simply bad habits carried over from Down Dog. The following exercise focuses your attention on the correct placement of the hands and arms. Maintain this awareness as you progress into Chaturanga Dandasana.

Kneel on all fours and place your hands in front of you, shoulder-width apart. Carefully position your wrists so the flexion creases across the top of the wrist are parallel with the wall in front of you. Without turning the wrists in or out, extend the fingers so they radiate in all directions. This action will help distribute the weight of the body over a broader base. Check that you are pressing into the inner wrist as much as the outer wrist. Rocking onto the outsides of the wrists causes wrist pain and injury in these weight-bearing poses.

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Finally, lift the forearms up so the base of the palm almost lifts off the floor. This action will allow the weight of the body to be carried by the front portion of the palm and fingers rather than solely by the base of the wrist. After a minute, sit back into Child’s Pose, completely resting the arms.

Never practice poses such as Chaturanga Dandasana on a soft carpet or a surface like sand where the wrist will hyperextend below the level of the fingers. This hyperextension can cause immediate discomfort and may contribute in the long term to serious conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome, in which pressure on the median nerve in the wrist area causes pain, tingling, and muscular weakness.

Beginner Chaturanga Variation

Kneel on all fours again, placing the hands carefully as just described. Then sit back so the buttocks rest lightly on the heels, with the toes turned under.

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Bring the head and chest close to the floor and draw the front of the throat back toward

the neck as you did in the preliminary exercise. This action will increase the muscle tone throughout the front of the body, especially along the abdominal muscles. Maintaining this frontal support, shift the chest forward through the arms, dropping the chest toward the floor before the abdomen (Figure 3). This point is crucial, because if the abdomen drops toward the floor first, your upper back will be drawn into an arch. It will then be very difficult to lower the chest to the floor without collapsing the lumbar spine. As soon as the torso begins to move forward, bend the elbows, keeping them close to the ribs. Imagine the torso and elbows as two trains passing each other in opposite directions. As the head comes forward in front of the hands, continue in a circular motion to push up and back to the starting position on all fours. The pelvis and abdomen should lead in the ascent. Maintain a sense of connection between the front and back of the body as you come up, to prevent yourself from collapsing and breaking the strong line of force through the central axis of the torso.

One of the most common errors in Chaturanga Dandasana is bringing the chest and head all the way forward over straight arms. Because lowering yourself from this position is so much more work for the arms, you will invariably try to come down by arching the upper back and lowering the abdomen to the floor first (Figure 4-incorrect). You can avoid this problem by synchronizing the forward movement of the chest with the bending of the elbows.

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Now try the pose again, this time focusing your attention on your hands and arms. Check that the elbows do not splay out to the sides as you come for-ward, an action that will cause the shoulders to turn inward and the weight to fall heavily onto the outer wrist. As you shift your chest through the arms, be especially careful not to lift the front portion of the palm and drop into the base of the wrist. By keeping the pressure on the front portion of the palm and fingers, you not only avoid straining the wrists but activate the shoulders and upper chest.

A little attention at this early stage of practice will go a long way toward preventing painful wrist injuries. Just as practicing Down Dog prepares you for Chaturanga Dandasana, practicing Chaturanga Dandasana with alignment in the hands will prepare you for the more advanced arm balances such as Crane Pose (Bakasana). What you learn in the simpler poses is naturally incorporated into more complex positions.

Experienced Chaturanga Variation

Begin as in the previous variation, except this time, as you bring the head past the hands, lift the knees off the floor (Figure 5). Slide the feet backward until the legs are completely straight, extending strongly back through the heels. Breathe evenly,

reaching out through the head and heels.

To come out of the pose, bring the chest even farther through the arms and in a circular motion lift up and back into Downward-Facing Dog.

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Just as it is important for the health of the spine not to come down into this asana with the back collapsed, it is equally important that you come out of the posture using the arms, chest, and abdominal muscles rather than the muscles along the back of the spine. Be sure to keep the back straight. The back will feel the least strain if you activate the front of the body so the throat and abdominal muscles feel connected to the front of the spine. If you find that you do not have the arm strength to come up with the legs straight, touch the knees to the floor and make an honest attempt to come out with integrity in the spine. You will progress very quickly, gaining strength and coordination, if you work from a place of spinal integrity. Con-versely, you will stay weak in the arms and upper body, as well as straining the back, if you insist on arching the spine to come out of the pose.

In the final variation of Chaturanga Dandasana, come forward from Downward-Facing Dog with straight legs. Maintain a strong reach back through the heels throughout your descent so that the lumbar spine elongates. Move the elbows back toward the feet and in toward the ribs. When you are able to keep the torso as one unit, the driving force will move so clearly from the hands to the feet and from the crown of the head to the tailbone that an unexpected lightness will fill the body. This lightness is a good indication that you have indeed fused the many parts of yourself into an integrated whole.

Achieving this kind of body integration takes time and may be more difficult than the more measurable goal of flexibility. Taking something apart (as many a budding mechanic has discovered) is often easier than putting it back together again. For students with very loose ligaments and highly flexible bodies, poses like Chaturanga Dandasana can be as much a psychological testing ground as a physical challenge.

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It took at least a year of practicing before I could lower myself into Chaturanga Dandasana without collapsing. I clearly remember the moment as a stepping stone. Many other things seemed to “come together” in my life after that, as if the cohesion between my tissues was bringing about a psychological sturdiness.

Necessary limitations and constraints balance mobility and freedom, much as the molecular force between particles acts to unite them into a whole. The interplay between flexibility and integrity and the ongoing regulation of each by the other is part

of the process of regaining wholeness which we call yoga.
The lessons we learn from the challenging struggle of bringing these diametric qualities into balance are what we will carry with us when we step off the yoga mat.
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You've pasted two full Yoga Journal articles: one is a 10-minute **neck and shoulders** sequence by Yoga With Kassandra and the other is Donna Farhi's detailed tutorial on **Chaturanga Dandasana**.[1][2]

If you tell me what you want to do with them, I can help you, for example:

- Turn the 10-minute neck/shoulder flow into a quick written routine or printable checklist.[1]
- Extract key coaching cues for Chaturanga that you can use with clients (wrist setup, elbow path, front-body engagement, regressions).[2]

- Adapt either sequence for strength athletes or martial artists (e.g., prep for push-ups, grappling posture, or shoulder health).[2][1]

What would you like: a condensed routine, coaching notes, or a modified program tailored to your athletes?

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